

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Yoshiko Araki, 70, retired camp store owner, Paia

*"Anyway, we struggled so much over money that there were times when I wondered if I should not have started a business at all.... There were times when I'd be so tired as I counted the money, I'd fall asleep with my cheek on the coins."*

Yoshiko (Kikkawa) Araki, Japanese, was born October 15, 1909 in Honolulu. When she was two years old, she moved to Japan with her mother and graduated from a girl's high school in Hiroshima.

In 1929, Araki returned to Hawaii and settled in Paia. The following year, she became a Japanese-language schoolteacher in the Paia area. In 1940, Araki and her husband Masayoshi, whom she married in 1929, began Araki Store in Paia Camp. Soon after the store began, World War II broke out, and the area was inundated with soldiers stationed nearby. Araki Store prospered during those times.

Araki continued working at the store, even after her husband died in 1953. Finally, in 1969 she closed the store. Today she lives in Wailuku and is active in the Congregational Church. She enjoys Japanese flower arranging, poetry, and brush painting.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yoshiko Araki (YA)

November 8, 1979

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Yukihiisa Suzuki (YS) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Miyuki Rickard.]

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Yoshiko Araki. Today is November 8, 1979, and we're at her home in Wailuku, Maui.

YS: According to Mr. Nishimoto, you were born in Hawaii.

YA: That's right. I was born in Honolulu.

YS: Then your parents were already here in Honolulu?

YA: That's right.

YS: Where were your parents from?

YA: My father was from Shimane prefecture. In those days, there were no immigrants from Shimane prefecture.

YS: That's right, very few.

YA: There were none. So they apparently transferred their residency to Hiroshima, became residents of Hiroshima, and came here.

YS: Why was that?

YA: It was because Shimane prefecture did not release any immigrants at that time.

YS: Do you remember what your father's motives were for coming to Hawaii?

YA: I don't remember if I told this to Mr. Nishimoto [in a previous conversation] or not, but you know in Japan, there are ancestral lands and houses. Well, apparently my father was the second eldest son, and because of his parents' seal, he had to pay off others'

debts. Because his land, house, and money were gone, he wanted to build up his family once again. This, I understand, was his motive.

YS: When did your father come to Hawaii?

YA: I don't know, but I think it was during the big flux of official immigrants.

YS: Did your father come here first and then send for your mother to join him here?

YA: No, my mother's father and mother--my grandparents--came as immigrants from Hiroshima and brought their daughter--who was my mother--with them. In that way, a person from Shimane prefecture [YA's father] and a person from Hiroshima prefecture [YA's mother] were married. (Laughs)

YS: So your grandfather came from Hiroshima?

YA: Uh huh [yes].

YS: So, Mrs. Araki, you were born Meiji . . .

YA: It was almost at the end of the Meiji era. Nineteen nine [1909], so it must have been Meiji 42.

YS: Meiji ended at year 45 [1912], right?

YA: Uh huh. That's right.

YS: It was October 15, 1909. Is that right?

YA: Yes, I was born October 15.

YS: I understand you went back to Japan after you were born.

YA: That's right. At that time, my mother was pregnant with my younger sister. Since my grandparents had gone back to Japan, she wanted them to see their grandchild. The baby would be born soon, so she had to hurry there and return quickly. I remember my mother telling me this when I was a child.

YS: Did your parents both go back?

YA: No, my father remained here, and my mother took me back with her. Once we were back in Japan, everyone was so curious and delighted to have a grandchild from Hawaii that I was spoiled. As she [YA's mother] was saying, she wants to go back soon [to Hawaii] because it's almost time for her to have the baby, but the talk turned to how nice it would be to have the baby there [in Japan] before returning. So she had the baby--my sister. Then when she finally started making plans to return here, six months had passed. Using

that as an excuse, the matter was dropped and finally, we did not come back at all.

YS: When did you come back to Hawaii?

YA: When I was eighteen years old. After graduating from a women's high school, I came in August.

YS: That would make it Showa . . .

YA: Showa---I came in 1927. Showa 2, huh? I don't remember the Japanese year exactly.

YS: Did your mother also return at that time?

YA: (Laughs) This is embarrassing, but without being ashamed or scandalous--I've told this to Mr. Nishimoto [in a previous conversation]--I can talk about it now. When I came back here [to Hawaii], there was a second mother. [YA's father remarried in Hawaii.]

YS: A second mother?

YA: By a "second mother," I mean . . . . Anyway, I thought my father was alone, but there was a mother, and a younger brother had been born. He was nine years old.

One of my mother's relatives was working under my father at Dillingham [Corporation]. He was a carpenter foreman. But when he [the relative] had gone back to Japan, he never said anything about this [to us], so we didn't know.

Every month, the money came [to us] as usual. During this time, my father had gone back to Japan many times. Each time he went back, he would take new and unusual things like toilets. There were no Western toilets there then. He would take these things--window screens, screen doors. These things he would take back. Then he sent them from Hiroshima to our house at Izumo. Our family had all these knickknacks.

YS: So your mother never came back [to Hawaii]?

YA: Since my father had found a second mother [wife], he would not send for her [first wife] because she would be in the way. So my mother . . . . You know how people those days were so ignorant . . . . She should have gone to the consulate office in Kobe--or was it Yokohama--and made arrangements [to come to Hawaii], but she would not. She thought too much time had passed, and it was too late. Very regretfully, she thought my father would not be too lonely since there was another mother. Every month the money came . . . . So, I think, in this way, the months and years went by.

YS: Did your mother die in Japan?



YA: I don't exactly recall my mother's death. January 1 . . . . Last year was twenty years [1958]. When does that make it? (Laughs)

YS: So, Mrs. Araki, you returned to Hawaii alone?

YA: When I was eighteen years old, I came back. I wanted to study. In Japan, when I told them I wanted to continue school, my father said it's the purpose for girls to get married, so I've had enough education. He wouldn't let me go [to school].

I wanted to come to Hawaii since it's my birthplace, so I said I'd go to school and came here. But when I arrived, the stepmother was here, so I couldn't study as I wanted to, and it seemed like getting married was the right thing to do.

YS: Since you were eighteen when you came, you must have already graduated from a girl's high school?

YA: No, I'm from Yamanaka City [in Hiroshima], but graduated from Yamanaka High School and came here in August of that year [1927].

YS: Did you come right after graduation?

YA: No, graduation is in March, right? So I came in August.

YS: How was it when you came to Hawaii? Since you went back to Japan at age two, your English . . .

YA: I couldn't understand English, so while my parents slept in the next room, I cried under the blankets. My stepmother was already there, and also I couldn't understand English as I wanted to. I was so unhappy that I cried a lot.

YS: So when you were eighteen years old, in 1927, you came. You started to teach in a Japanese language school?

YA: In 1929, I got married to Araki. Do you want to hear the details of that? The answer to your question is enough?

YS: If it's not too many questions for you, please give us the details. When did you get married?

YA: Nineteen twenty-nine [1929]. I pulled out the records today to check. I didn't want to lie or make mistakes in talking to you. Last year before Prime Minister Fukuda came [to visit Hawaii], I went to Wailea to arrange flowers. At that time, I needed records of my personal history. So, I checked up and found it.

YS: Let's see, 1929, right? Your husband's name was Masayoshi Araki . . .

YA: Yes.

YS: What did your husband do?

YA: He worked with electronics. At the Paia Mill, he worked as an electrician.

YS: Was your husband a nisei?

YA: No, he was also issei. No, not issei. He was sent for from Japan [i.e., he was born in Japan, but called over to Hawaii by his parents].

YS: Wasn't that unusual for him to be working as an electrician?

YA: He learned it from watching others [i.e., on-the-job training]. It's not as if he learned it in Japan. So he worked with electronics.

YS: So, you started teaching Japanese the following year after your marriage?

YA: I think it was the year I got married [1929].

YS: Did you teach at the Japanese school for a long time?

YA: Yes, at the Makawao Japanese School. The Paia School was closer, but they had enough teachers, so I didn't have the opportunity. In those days, we didn't have any money, so we borrowed \$500 from my husband's uncle and bought a new Chevrolet, (laughs) and I learned to drive and commuted to Makawao. Then I had a chance to work in Paia.

When I was in Honolulu, I taught for a short while in Puuloa. I taught Japanese for half a day and studied English for half a day at St. Andrew's Priory.

YS: When was that?

YA: That was right after I came here from Japan [1927]. In Japan I studied English, but you know how the accent is different from here and Japan? So the reason I don't use English is because there was a time when others laughed at me.

When I was in Paia, I went to the butcher store and asked, "May I have meat?" and was asked which cut. So, I said, "steak," but the butcher heard "stick." I thought I said "steak," to cut me some steak.

You know in the butcher shop, there is that thing to sharpen knives--long, sharp, round thing. So, like this [holding it up], he said, "Mrs. Araki's saying, 'Stick, stick.'"

(Laughter)

YA: I was so embarrassed. After that time, English just wouldn't come out from my mouth. I know I shouldn't feel embarrassed. If you feel embarrassed, you can't do anything. Nowadays, I've become more

thick-skinned and think that even if I make mistakes and they laugh, that's how I learn. But I was much younger then.

WN: Why did you come to Paia?

YA: My husband's uncle and aunt were in Paia. Before they left for Japan, they came out to Honolulu and looked me up because they were told that in this area was someone named Kikkawa from Shimane prefecture.

In those days--and also today--people from the same prefecture were close, and there were so few from Shimane. So, they were curious and wanted to meet me and came to my house. When they came, I saw for the first time my husband's uncle and aunt.

They said, "We've heard you are from the same place, so we came to see you. We're on our way to Japan now."

So they left for Japan and on their way home again, they stopped by to see me. I didn't know this then, but they had talked to my father. They said, "We have an adopted son at our house." They had asked what my father thought of marrying this son with his daughter, namely me. I learned about this later. Fifty or sixty years ago during the immigration period, these things happened.

My husband was adopted by his uncle and aunt. The reason for his being adopted was because the uncle's three sons died one after another. So, feeling that they could not raise children, they decided to adopt from Japan. They were his real uncle and aunt, so they adopted him from Japan [and thus became his parents].

After they adopted him, they had three sons of their own. They all survived, so they didn't want him anymore. My father said he wouldn't let me marry this boy, but he would adopt him instead. As you know, in Japan, there's a saying that if you have three gō [.384 pint] of rice bran, you should not be allowed to be adopted. I thought if this was someone who would be willing to be adopted like this, it would be better off to marry.

I had made a promise to take care of my mother, so the circumstance . . . . At that time--I don't think I was twenty years old yet--my father was worried about what to do for me. His [adopted] son was not on the family register, so it would be a pity because he wanted to take the boy back to Japan. He wanted all three of them to live in Japan. Once they were in Japan, he [YA's half brother] would have to go into the army . . .

YS: So your father wanted to take you to Japan?

YA: No, no. It seems my story is all confused. Remember there was a half brother when I came to Hawaii? [My father] would want to take that child back to Japan when he graduated from high school. He

said he'd take him back after graduation from the eighth grade. When he took him back, if he were to be drafted into the army, it would be shameful because he is not on the family register [i.e., he was illegitimate]. Father felt sorry for him, so he consulted me. I also didn't know what to do for him. I wanted to take care of my mother [living in Japan], and the boy--my half brother--Kikkawa side, would be able to. So, if there was someone willing to be adopted [by YA's father], I would marry him.

YS: By "mother," you mean your real mother?

YA: You know my real mother was in Japan, so I wanted to look after her. So, I wrote a letter, saying I would look after her, so to get a divorce [from YA's father]. I asked her to do this because my half brother, who was nine years old and soon to graduate from the eighth grade, would be shamed in Japan when he went to register for the army. It would be a scandal since he would be considered illegitimate. So, I promised her in my letter to look after her if she'd break family ties [with YA's father]. But my mother became angry with me, saying that I'd also taken sides with my father.

YS: By looking after your mother, you didn't intend for her to come here, but to look after her financially?

YA: That's right. I meant financially. Because as it soon became time for me to marry, I was afraid my father would stop sending her support. My father was encouraging me. Since he [Mr. Araki] was willing to be adopted, he said I should get married. I was going to support my mother financially. Finally, at the end, my mother consented. Whether I went to Japan to look after her or sent money, she realized about the boy here, and she became sympathetic. With that, she decided to cut ties [divorce YA's father]. At that time, I was very sad and my father had mixed emotions of both sadness and happiness. We were all saddened by such a situation.

YS: So, at that time, you cut ties and married Mr. Araki?

YA: That's right. I got married. Araki was not wanted by his uncle, so he said he would come to my place.

YS: This was in Paia?

YA: That's when I came to Paia--his place of work.

YS: So your husband's work was already in Paia?

YA: He had worked in Paia from before.

YS: His uncle and aunt lived there?

YA: That's right, he lived with them. But after we were married, we received a small house in Paia Camp. It was a small plantation

house.

YS: Was there a number for the camp house?

YA: No, not like in the old days when they were called Camp 1 or Camp 2. It was just called Paia Camp.

YS: Did his uncle and aunt work at the camp?

YA: He [the uncle] worked at the pump where electricity was generated.

YS: Did your husband also work there?

YA: No, he worked in electronics. From the time he was young, he learned by watching others.

YS: He worked at the plant?

YA: That's right.

YS: What were your first thoughts when you moved from Honolulu to Paia?

YA: Oh, I wanted to cry then, too. When we were going to our house, there was nothing but cane fields on both sides. It was like going deep into the mountains--nothing but cane fields. It was high up on the hill. It's where in the old days there was a junior college there--Maunaolu. It was beyond that. He lived there with his uncle and aunt.

We talked about going to Honolulu, because someone offered my husband a job, but in the meantime, we had a baby. In the first two years, we had a daughter. Wanting to show the new baby to the parents, I set out for Honolulu by boat--there were no planes like today. It was an overnight trip from Kahului to Honolulu Harbor.

Once we got to Honolulu--you know how the houses are so small and close together--I tried not to let the baby cry all night, but the more I comforted her, it seemed worse. That's when I decided that the country was the best place to raise children. Before I came out to Honolulu, I didn't want to live in such a lonely place [Paia], but once in Honolulu, there was so little space that I couldn't even hang out the diapers without having them visible from the street. It was so crowded. It was near Aala Lane, in downtown. So I finally knew for sure that Maui was better. (Laughs)

YS: When you came out to Honolulu, did your husband find work there?

YA: No, we didn't come to look for work. It was just to show the new grandchild. I took my baby for the father to see.

YS: So the uncle and aunt were in Paia, and his parents in Honolulu?

- YA: That's right. That's when I found out that Honolulu was not the ideal place to raise children or to live. In the country, everyone is so friendly and kind, but in the city, everyone is so busy going to work each morning. You don't know who lives where.
- YS: So you missed Paia?
- YA: I've stayed in Paia ever since.
- YS: You took the boat again for an overnight trip back . . .
- YA: That's right. On the boat the baby would cry. In those days, there were no planes.
- YS: Did you go by bus from Kahului to Paia?
- YA: No, a friend of ours had a car.
- YS: So you settled in Paia and began to teach Japanese?
- YA: That's the only work I could do since my English was not too good. Even though I had only a high school diploma, there were not too many high school graduates. At that time, I first taught in Makawao and then transferred to Paia. I was paid only forty dollars salary and five dollars for transportation expenses. Forty-five dollars. (Laughs) When I came to Paia, I only received forty-five dollars, too. That's per month! Paia was closer [to YA's home], but I received the same amount.
- YS: What year was that when you started to teach at Makawao?
- YA: It was 1929. I couldn't be married and stay idle, so I went to work.
- YS: When did you transfer to Paia?
- YA: Let's see. I think I taught [at Makawao] for about five years.
- WN: Why did you change to Paia?
- YA: It was closer.
- YS: So there were two Japanese schools in this area? Makawao and Paia?
- YA: There were several--Paia, Makawao, on this side. Wailuku, Kahului. There were many. Wherever there were public [English] schools, there were Japanese schools nearby. Paia was a very large school.
- YS: Makawao had how many students?
- YA: Makawao had only about 200 students, but Paia had about 1,000.

YS: How many teachers were there?

YA: There were about ten.

YS: In Paia?

YA: Yes.

WN: How about Makawao?

YA: There were four, including me.

YS: What kind of textbooks did you use?

YA: Unlike the ones used now, they were not Japanese Ministry of Education approved books, but ones that had been revised in Hawaii.

YS: It was not the Japanese government approved text of that time?

YA: No, that was what was revised [in Hawaii].

YS: When I was a student, lesson number one was hato, hana, hato, mame  
 . . . . .

YA: So in your time, too. Hana, hato, mame, kotori, tamago [said in singsong cadence]--like that?

YS: Wasn't there one hana, hato, mame, matsu? Then later it was changed to Sakura, Sakura [a popular Japanese song about cherry blossoms].

YA: Excuse me, but how old are you?

YS: I'm fifty-six . . . . [Born] in the year of Taisho 12 [1923].

YA: You're still young. How nice.

YS: No, I'm not that young anymore. That means I was born three years before you came here.

(Laughter)

YS: That was 1923.

YA: Then you remember the war . . . .

YS: I remember quite a lot. Now, did the children go to Japanese language school after public school as they do now?

YA: That's right.

YS: So, the system was similar to the one now--the children went to public school in the morning until noon and then went to language



school in the afternoon?

YA: No, no, it wasn't like that . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

YS: Then it's the same as today, isn't it?

YA: That's right. But there are now some children who don't go to Japanese school. In those days, they were mostly sent [by the parents].

YS: In those days, the camp parents were very diligent about sending their children to Japanese school. Why do you think that was so-- why they insisted their children go?

YA: They certainly did insist. Even when I was a child, it was like that. If children were to be raised in Hawaii, they'd become like kanaka, so it was thought that it was better to get an education in Japan. Those who were financially able sent their children to Japan.

YS: So they sent them to Japanese school as preparation for that? If they went to Japan and didn't speak the language, it would be a problem . . .

YA: It was better to know both Japanese and English. The parents didn't understand English, so if the children spoke only English, they would not understand Japanese. It was so they could communicate better that they wanted the children to know both. They immigrated to Hawaii without receiving any formal education, so they felt it was important to teach their children both languages. It must have been that reason.

But since I've lived in Hawaii and English is the main language, there were times when I begrudged my parents. I wondered how much better it would have been if I had been educated in Hawaii. It was because I went back to Japan that it's turned out this way [YN not knowing English]. But, on the other hand, I also think it was good that I experienced the Japanese culture--that I was educated in Japan. I think both ways.

YS: At that time, did the Japanese school teach any courses other than language?

YA: No, only Japanese language.

YS: Did you teach things such as calligraphy?



YA: We didn't teach much calligraphy--no, not too much. We did teach sewing, but only on Saturdays.

YS: Did the boys and girls receive different or separate curriculum?

YA: No . . .

YS: Things were certainly different in Japan. The boys had carpentry and the girls had sewing. I understand there are no differences now. In those days, the Japanese language school . . .

YA: It was that the Japanese language was the main subject. It was a coeducational school, so it was not divided into carpentry and such. But on Saturdays, we taught the girls sewing.

YS: How did you feel about being educated in Japan, then coming to Paia to teach Japanese? About teaching the Japanese language you learned while in Japan?

YA: You know, America is freedom--free to do whatever. They wouldn't listen too well to the teachers. I think they listened to the public [English] school teachers, but since Japanese school was only supplemental, not required, they did as they pleased. (Pause) Sometimes I wished there was something I could do about this.

YS: So you taught from 1930 all the way to before the war in 1940?

YA: I taught until 1940. Then in 1940, with my husband and two children, the four of us went to Japan to show the grandchildren [to YA's mother]. I didn't really quit at that time. We planned it during summer vacation.

WN: How long was each school day?

YA: Two hours, one hour for each class. We had two groups, so when one finished, there was a break, and then the second group would come. We would finish in two hours.

YS: With the recess, it was a little over two hours, huh?

YA: No. It was forty-five minutes [class session] and fifteen minutes [break] . . .

YS: Was that every day?

YA: It was according to the public school schedule--every day.

YS: Was that from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.?

YA: Two p.m. to 3 p.m., and 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

YS: Did the students have such things as sports competitions?

YA: Yes, we did have sports competitions in Japanese school.

YS: So, you didn't only teach Japanese. There were other activities.

YA: Japanese conversation. We put on plays; we had athletic events. Once or twice a year.

YS: You were saying before, you meant to show the grandchildren to your mother in Japan?

YA: Of course, to my mother in Japan, but also to my father and stepmother who were here [in Honolulu before]. They had returned to Japan with the boy--my younger half brother. When he graduated from the eighth grade, they took him back [to Japan].

YS: Then you came back [to Paia]?

YA: Yes, I came back.

YS: You didn't teach after that?

YA: What happened was our next-door neighbor--Mrs. Ogata, who had a barbershop--had a business that lost money. There was a small store in Paia which was half barbershop and half grocery. Mrs. Ogata handled only the barbershop and her father handled the grocery store part, but people would say, "Mr. Fujikado, I'm leaving money here for one pack of cigarettes." They could take two or three and he wouldn't know because he was so busy playing go or shōgi. With that kind of situation, the store lost money every month.

So, Mrs. Ogata wanted to sell the store. She asked why don't I go into business and buy her store. She said this because she was my friend. Since I was only making forty-five dollars [a month] teaching, I couldn't help my mother very well. Each month there wasn't as much as I'd like to have sent her.

So, I thought if I'd start a business, I could make money. I told her that her offer sounded good, but I can't speak English, only Japanese. But she said I could do it since almost all of the customers spoke Japanese. If I was ever in a situation I couldn't handle, she said she'd be right next door at the barbershop, so she could come over to help. She encouraged me to open my business. With that, I wanted to now quit teaching even though we had hurried back before summer vacation ended. School started in September, but I resigned before that.

YS: How much did you pay for the store?

YA: That was (chuckles) when Japanese yen was worth a lot more. My husband's insurance had depleted, and we had spent all our savings on the trip to Japan--we were penniless. We didn't even have a penny, and she said \$1,000. But it sounded cheap. We didn't buy the

entire place, only the location since the land, house, and store belonged to the plantation. So I borrowed money from three friends.

YS: To total \$1,000?

YA: Yes. (Laughs)

YS: You say the store belongs to the plantation . . .

YA: The store belongs to the plantation, so I only bought the location--a lease.

That's not all. I didn't know [at the time] if it was a good idea or not to quit teaching to start a business, but I wanted to do it. As I mentioned before, my father used to take back [to Japan] every year things such as screens, glass--things that were not available in Japan. With that, he built a fine home. The toilet is Western-style, and Japanese-style--even the Japanese-style one is like the Western one so that you can't see below [into the septic tank]. He also built a basement which is warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

I saw this fine home for myself. My mother's was just a plain house in Hiroshima, but since she didn't farm, it was kept clean. After seeing all this, I felt sorry for my mother. In order to take care of my mother properly, I couldn't do it on a schoolteacher's salary. By "taking care of her," I mean I wanted to build her a house.

WN: How much was your husband making?

YA: It was a normal salary.

YS: What do you mean by "a normal salary"?

YA: At that time [1940], I think average was about seventy-five dollars [a month]. With overtime, about \$100. But compared to those who worked in the mill, those who worked as electricians were lucky to have overtime. They [the mill workers] were envious. So you can see how low salaries were and how inexpensive things were then.

YS: What did your three friends do? Were they housewives?

YA: No . . . . They were close friends. I borrowed from those three. No, it wasn't three, only two. One was my neighbor in front. No, it was three--it was three of them. I did borrow from three people. Within one year, I paid them all back.

YS: That was \$1,000? Right?

YA: Yes.

YS: The \$1,000 was for . . .

YA: I needed \$1,000 to buy the store. Every time something was sold, I'd put aside a little [cash] to buy more stock. It was sell and buy almost daily--a little bit each day. I remember all the money my husband earned at the mill went into the store. If I couldn't borrow [the \$1,000], I couldn't buy stock. I remember there were four one-gallon bottles of shōyu in a case, so to make the shelves look fuller, I'd put out all four. (Laughs) Canned goods were all lined up (laughs). But everyone was so happy that I opened the store. They said they couldn't buy all the types of merchandise from Mr. Fujikado [former owner] but were glad that I had lots of variety and at the same prices as before. They bought a lot.

YS: Mr. Fujikado was the barber's . . .

YA: Mrs. Ogata's father was Mr. Fujikado. Mrs. Ogata--her husband's name was Ogata.

YS: How did you handle the stock?

YA: Since we had a truck, my husband . . . . He worked at night. In those days, work days were about twelve hours [at Paia Mill]. Eight-hour shifts came much later, I think.

YS: So, he worked twelve hours per day, including overtime?

YA: Yes, he worked that long. Anyway, during the day he would put in the order, and during his lunch hour, he'd go and pick up the stock. But money was so scarce. We needed to leave some money in the cash register, too. But I'd leave a small amount in the cash register in the morning, and by evening, there would be quite a lot of money accumulated. In the morning I'd leave about fifty dollars. I'd have to leave about that much when people needed change. We paid cash for things such as soda. Checks could have been used, too . . . .

Anyway, we struggled so much over money that there were times when I wondered if I should not have started a business at all. But as it is now, if I bought one case [of something], one case would go on the shelves. But by evening, the money would come in, and I'd happily count the money from the cash register and put it into a large safe. There were times when I'd be so tired as I counted the money--the store closed--I'd fall asleep on the coins and have coin marks here. (YA points to cheeks.) I'd fall asleep with my cheek on the coins.

YS: Can we go back a little bit? Can you tell me more about borrowing the \$1,000?

YA: I had borrowed the first \$1,000 from two people. But when the war broke out, within one year, I repaid it all. It was such a struggle . . .

YS: When you opened your store, wasn't there another store at the

plantation?

YA: Yes, there was.

YS: Were you in competition with the plantation store?

YA: No, it wasn't like that. The plantation store was so large and mine so small. I only sold everyday necessities.

YS: How large was your store?

YA: It was a small store. From there to here. (YA gestures to show size.)

YS: So, from here to the toko-no-ma? About twenty feet?

YA: Yes, I think the depth was about that. It's wider than that (YA points) to the bedroom [about 35 feet].

YS: It was a good size then . . .

YA: I needed to have most things people bought in that store.

YS: At the time you borrowed the money, did you join a tanomoshi?

YA: I did join a tanomoshi, but that was after [having borrowed]. In the beginning, all I could think about was to repay the three from whom I'd borrowed. From July to December [1941]--at that time just before the war [World War II] broke out--those who anticipated the war and were well-stocked made money. But no one knew about that then. So the large stores had lots of stock, but I didn't have much. Each day, I bought more of what I sold with each day's cash income.

YS: How much lease or rent did you pay each month?

YA: It was like this. Just when my business was starting to do well, the war started on December 7. So, because we were aliens, it [the store] was closed. I lost my [American] citizenship and as you know, my husband was an alien. But because it [the store] was in my name, right away--in about a week--we were opened again. Then . . .

YS: Weren't you always an American citizen?

YA: I was, but between 1927 and 1929 there was a law that if you married an alien, you would also lose citizenship. So, those who married during that period didn't have their citizenship anymore.

YS: So you opened again right after the war started?

YA: In a week.

YS: You were able to open again when the two countries were in conflict?

YA: My husband is a Japanese citizen, but since I operated the place and he was just a helper, they okayed it.

YS: As I asked before, didn't you first join a tanomoshi? You didn't borrow money from that?

YA: It was a very profitable time when we did join the tanomoshi, so [we didn't have to borrow from that].

YS: When you bought the store and struggled so much--falling asleep on the coins and all . . .

(Laughter)

YS: . . . that was in July when you bought it?

YA: Yes, that was July.

YS: When you bought in July, and when you finally became a little bit comfortable . . .

YA: No, no. We opened in July, then it was December. It was 1940 when we went to Japan, so I had gone back to teaching the next year, too. Isn't that right?

YS: The time you bought was . . .

YA: Nineteen forty-one [1941]. It was July.

YS: Since you were married to an alien, didn't you lose your American citizenship?

YA: I lost it, but since I was Hawaii-born, I was allowed to open [the store]. Not only mine, even in Lower Paia, all the other stores were forced to close for a while at the beginning of the war.

YS: When you opened the store with the borrowed \$1,000 and put in stock, didn't you need a license?

YA: Of course, a license was necessary.

YS: Where did you get the license?

YA: From the Department of Health in Wailuku. At that time, I had to clean and paint the interior [of the store]. I had to also report to the plantation. They didn't want me to have a big business--certainly not bigger than their own. They wanted to know what type of merchandise I was going to sell. I had to itemize--vegetables, school supplies, grocery, fish, cold drinks--had to write them all like that for the okay.

YS: Quantity also?



YA: No, just report the items--they okayed it. As it turned out, it didn't become a large store. (Laughs)

YS: Then, just the merchandise, not how much you sold.

YA: That's right. In those days--not like today--it was much easier.

YS: So, the licenses were from the Board of Health and the plantation and what else?

YA: So the papers were sent to the plantation. The Board of Health didn't care about the merchandise as long as I conformed to the health regulations. But to the plantation I had to itemize each thing I sold regardless of how few.

YS: So the papers [documents] were only those two?

YA: That's right. The Department of Health and also needed a grocery license. That's all.

YS: Did you live at the store?

YA: No, we lived a little ways away. Two or three doors away.

YS: Besides the \$1,000, didn't you have to pay lease?

YA: I did pay. [At this point, it is apparent Mrs. Araki misunderstood the question. She talks about interest on the money she borrowed.]

Things sold very well--everyone was so nice to me. As things were sold, I bought stock [merchandise], but not with all that I made. I had to put aside a little bit each month to repay. Anyway, when the war started on December 7, one of the friends wanted to know when I would repay, even though the friend had money. So even though I scrimped a lot, I couldn't pay them [at that time]. I didn't know what to do . . . .

There was a neighbor in front named Mrs. Kesaji, who was from Okinawa--that would make it three people [whom YA borrowed money from]. She said, "You look awful. What are you worried about?"

So I said that the money I borrowed in July, even on December 7, I couldn't repay, and they've demanded it now.

Then Mrs. Kesaji said, "It's such a small amount, I'll loan it to you, so pay them."

YS: Kesaji?

YA: Kesaji. She used to watch my children when I taught at the Japanese school. She was my neighbor in front. Anyway, she said she would loan me, so for me to repay them.

YS: How much was that?

YA: Oh, about that time it would have been good to repay about \$300. As you know, I borrowed \$1,000 from two people. I should have repaid a little each month, but because the war started, I still hadn't paid one at all, and this one was still about \$300 or so more. So right away Mrs. Kesaji loaned me \$300--in those days, it was in cash. That night, I went to repay it, including interest. That [person YA paid] was a very close friend, but what she said to me really hurt me.

YS: The store was yours, right? You bought the store?

YA: Yes. Because I borrowed that initial \$1,000, it became mine. But I borrowed \$500 each from two people, and I wanted to repay them both, but the one friend demanded the money back when the war started. So, that person [Mrs. Kesaji] helped me pay it.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 7-13-1-79; SIDE ONE

YS: How did the Araki Store do after the war had started?

YA: For a while after the war started, people stopped coming to the store. It seemed the camp women didn't even leave their homes. They didn't even want to go out because it was a U.S.-Japanese war. There were blackouts at night. It would be bad for light to shine [at night]. I remember there was a young man from the camp who was a policeman until ten years ago. He was hired as a guard. He carried a rod [pointer] and was very strict about light shining through.

YS: How did this affect your business?

YA: The large stores which had money would buy up a lot of stock, but since I didn't have much money, I couldn't stock very much. So when the war started, we were short of many things which became rationed.

The things I needed more of, they would not sell to me. This continued for about two to three months. Then rice and canned goods started to be shipped from the Mainland. It was inconvenient for about two or three months. I didn't have the money even though I wanted to buy more. I couldn't put in more stock.

We didn't even think to go to a bank to borrow money. We should have done that to keep the business going, but we were afraid that we might not be able to repay.

YS: Borrowed money from friends, eh?



YA: Yes, at that time from friends. Nowadays, friends don't lend money. People go to banks and loan companies. In those days, we went to tanomoshi or to friends to borrow.

YS: Did any of your friends ever suggest using the bank?

YA: No, no one talked about that in those days. Back then there were only Bank of Hawaii and First Hawaiian [then known as Bishop Bank].

YS: Where did you buy the merchandise sold in your store?

YA: A&B [Alexander & Baldwin] Store.

YS: Wholesaler?

YA: It was the Paia Store. A large plantation store where we bought our stock.

YS: Where was that? In town [i.e., Lower Paia]?

YA: No, not in town, but close to the mill. The building is not there anymore. It was such a big store.

YS: So the Paia Store supplied the plantation stores, Araki Store, and the others?

YA: They supplied all the stores. It was a big wholesaler. Then they closed and it--the A&B--moved to Kahului. [The A&B Commercial Company was formed in 1950.]

YS: Didn't goods from Japan stop coming into Paia Store as the war neared between July and December? In Japan, the American goods stopped coming in. Didn't you have a lot of Japanese merchandise?

YA: Yes, I had Japanese things.

YS: So when the war started, they stopped . . .

YA: Fearing that things might become scarce, I took home cases of sushi nori and long rice, instead of selling them. (Laughs) But, my, the long rice lasted such a long time--five or six years--without getting bugs in it. I even brought it here to this house, thinking it was too old to sell. Chinese certainly make good things.

YS: What types of things came from Japan? Shōyu, Ajinomoto, rubber tabi, canned goods? When imports from Japan stopped . . .

YA: We didn't have any of those things during the war.

YS: Didn't they make them in Honolulu?

YA: I think King Shoyu started making [shōyu] when the war was almost

over.

YS: At that time, probably dried fish and such other dried things came from Japan, but those things are available here, so . . .

YA: No, those things didn't come from Japan. Things such as dried cuttlefish used for New Years were not available. They didn't come in at all. During the war, we had only what was in stock to sell.

YS: So when the war finally started, what types of merchandise . . .

YA: No, we didn't sell Japanese goods, but American goods . . . . It didn't come for about two or three months. All the supplies went to the military first, but the people [civilians] did get a little. The wholesaler would only give us a little bit since our store was small. When the larger stores got ten cases, we only got one case.

For instance, oranges came in wooden boxes in those days. We didn't have a chance to get any because all the others wanted them. So they [wholesalers] would tell us to go to Kahului Harbor for a few. We had to get a pass to go there, and my husband would load up one or two [boxes] and bring it back. (Laughs) It was like that. Canned goods were no problem, but oranges were difficult to get.

YS: Did the situation continue like that for the duration of the war until it ended?

YA: No, it was inconvenient for two to three months, but later, we didn't experience any difficulties at all.

YS: So after about two to three months, did the blackouts continue?

YA: Yes, that's right.

YS: Your business continued smoothly nevertheless?

YA: Yes, it went smoothly--as I mentioned before--even though I was so tired as to make coin marks here (YA points to face). I got up at 4 o'clock in the morning to make cone sushi--100 or 200--to sell in the store, while the children slept. That sold very well--the store's unexpected profit.

YS: How much did you sell the cone sushi for?

YA: Five cents. I made them every morning. On Sundays, I made a lot more. You know, the Japanese people didn't have much in the way of recreation during the war, so on Sundays, they played golf. When they went golfing . . .

YS: You mean there was golf available even during the war?

YA: Yes, there was. Those who played golf then are now all old men.

I'd make the sushi early in the morning, and then my husband would take them to the golf course in Paia. He sold them along with soda. He'd soon return with the empty boxes and the money. It was all cash--those things were not on charge. They were only five cents each, but every day it added up.

When I think about it now, if I was smarter then, I should have hired someone to do the work so that I could have done something else. But in those days, there was nothing to do but work, so we worked very hard.

YS: Five cents or \$10,000, it's your personal strength . . .

YA: That's right. We'd have to look at it that way in order to continue working.

YS: Did you make the age for the cone sushi?

YA: Our back neighbor, the Tamashiro Tofu Store, made the age.

YS: Nori was no longer available, so you couldn't make nori sushi?

YA: That's right. I couldn't make nori sushi.

YS: The things you sold in the store--fish . . .

YA: Yes, fish. (Laughs) The canned goods, we only had to leave them out, and they sold themselves. Oh, yes, we had a back neighbor, Mrs. Murakami, who came to clean and put things on the shelves for us. Since all the young people were out working and we couldn't pay them much, Mrs. Murakami came to help out. She certainly was an honest, hard worker.

YS: Did you have vegetables from local farms?

YA: Yes, on the days my husband couldn't go, I'd take the truck on Mondays and Thursdays to buy at the Farmer's Exchange in Wailuku. There were mostly men there, very few women. Even when I had telephoned ahead with my order, I had to fight with the men if I wanted string beans. Once they put it by their place, even though I had put in an order, I couldn't touch it. When it was gone, that was it.

YS: I suppose they took advantage of a woman.

YA: Yes, that too. But usually, my husband went. He'd go at 4 o'clock in the morning, come home to eat breakfast, then he'd go to work [at Paia Mill]. He did that for us.

YS: Did you sell anything that the other stores didn't have? Araki Store exclusives?

YA: No, not particularly. The sushi sold as Araki sushi. Other than that, we thought of selling ice cream or sherbet and bought the

machine, but we didn't have the space to do it.

YA: So there were no Araki Store exclusives?

YS: No, we didn't have anything like that. Our policy for honesty was the best. People said our scale was fair. When I put fish on it, I didn't say the price while the needle was still moving like some others did. (Laughs) In those days, there were no electric scales, only the kind that hangs. I didn't realize this sort of thing [i.e., cheating] went on until the customers talked about it.

YS: Did you always pay cash when you bought at wholesale in Paia?

YA: No, we did use credit and charged sometimes.

YS: How did the charge work?

YA: Let's see . . . . When we didn't have enough money. Mostly we paid in cash.

YS: Who did you extend credit to?

YA: In the beginning, it was all cash and carry. But later . . . . In those days, payday was only once a month instead of twice a month for the plantation workers. The Filipinos usually charged a lot.

YS: Anyone could charge?

YA: Yes, anyone could. Once, while I was taking a lunch break--I went home for lunch to rest for about ten minutes--Mrs. Murakami, who couldn't write English, showed me some things she had entered in the charge book while I was gone. I couldn't figure out if she had written three "match" or if it was "March." We had a big laugh over the confusion.

Another thing that happened at the store: the Mother from the orphanage came in asking for lice comb, and I thought she said "rice cone" [i.e., cone sushi] and told her they're in the showcase. I didn't even know the word "lice."

(Laughter)

YA: It's not so now, but in those days, the children in the orphanage had head lice. I thought she said "rice cone," sushi, and asked her how many she wanted. She said only one.

(Laughter)

YA: My English wasn't very good. I wondered why she only wanted one. It was such an episode. (Laughs)

YS: When you extended credit, did you ever have any that didn't pay?

YA: Yes, there was one person. A gaijin [foreigner].

YS: The Japanese people didn't do those things?

YA: The Japanese people didn't do that kind of thing. They always paid what they charged.

YS: The one who didn't pay, the gaijin . . .

YA: By gaijin---he was Portuguese. At first, I didn't know anything, so I let him charge as much as he wanted. But later, he wasn't working. He wouldn't work. I think he was charging because he didn't work. Soon he went on welfare.

It added up to several hundred dollars, but he would pay a little and charge again. We used plantation employee numbers [to identify charge customers]. My daughter, who helped at the store after school, said we shouldn't give him any more credit because since he paid some and charged some, his account would never be cleared up. But I took pity on him and told her it was all right since his wife was living away in Kaneohe, [Oahu], and he had so many children. And he did pay a little, even if it was only five dollars on a ten-dollar charge.

She'd look at the figures and be very fussy about being more strict. When I quit my store [in 1964] to work for the A&B store [A&B Supermarket in Kahului], his son also worked there. Since the son knew, from the time he was very young, how I had helped his family, he, who worked in the butcher shop, was very good to me. Being nice to other people always comes back to you eventually. You can't collect a debt when they have nothing.

YS: You quit your store and went to A&B?

YA: A&B Supermarket--Alexander & Baldwin. They closed in Paia and moved to Kahului to open another large store.

YS: When did you quit the store? The Araki Store?

YA: Let's see, it's now been about fifteen years [since 1964].

YS: So you continued there all the way from 1940 to then?

YA: That's right.

YS: It's now getting late, so we'll have to return again to hear the rest of your story.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 7-24-2-80 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yoshiko Araki (YA)

January 24, 1980

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Yukihiisa Suzuki (YS) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[NOTE: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Scott Lehman.]

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Yoshiko Araki. Today is January 24, 1980, and we're at her home in Wailuku, Maui.

YS: When you started your store, you borrowed a thousand dollars from friends. Is that right?

YA: Yes.

YS: You borrowed a total of \$1,000 from both (two) friends.

YA: Yes, that's right.

YS: And you paid them back in about six months?

YA: Within one year--I think I paid them back in about six months.

YS: So the \$1,000 was . . .

YA: It was different from a thousand dollars now. Back then, a thousand dollars was a very difficult sum for us to get. I had gone to Japan and used all my money, right? I didn't have a cent.

YS: So, what really was the \$1,000 spent on?

YA: Well, the \$1,000 was---that [YA's store] was plantation property there, and it was a plantation house. Somebody had probably built the house himself a long time before--on plantation property. Or maybe it was an old plantation house they had transported there, I don't know. But it was just a matter of getting the location--the right to use the location. Even when I say I "bought" it, the land still belonged to the plantation. If they told me to leave, I would have had to leave in the old days.

YS: I believe you called it a "lease" during our earlier conversation . . .

YA: A lease. Yes, that's it.

YS: So, the location and the house . . . . The right to use the premises. That's what you paid the \$1,000 for?

YA: (Laughs) Yes, that's right. Anyway, once I had paid that, the house was mine and the plantation wouldn't fix anything anymore. So I had to have a toilet put in and do whatnot to get it fixed up.

YS: You put in a toilet?

YA: Yes. I put it in later.

YS: There wasn't any toilet?

YA: No, there was one outside. An outside toilet that the plantation had made--we used that.

YS: So, you fixed the place up?

YA: Yes. Later on.

YS: With your own money?

YA: Yes. I had to do it with my own money.

YS: So, the \$1,000 was sort of a premium.

YA: Yes. Yes, that's right. A payment to them [former tenants] because they were quitting and I was taking over--a premium, I guess. But that didn't have anything to do with the plantation.

YS: And then, you had to put a toilet in and put out money for . . .

YA: No. That I put in later. Until then I just pretended I didn't mind and used the outside toilet. (Laughs) The plantation toilet was an outside toilet, not an inside toilet.

YS: When you took over operation of the store then, what sort of things were already in the store?

YA: Oh, nothing special, really. There was a stand for the vegetables--a vegetable stand. And there was a showcase. That's about all. There wasn't anything, really.

YS: So, you had to renovate--to furnish . . .

YA: Yes. I furnished it.

YS: With what sort of things?

YA: Well, it needed better shelves. I bought a vegetable stand, which



was made from old knotty boards. It was all--oh, how would you say it? Iron? Iron, would you say? Anyway, it was painted over with this enamel paint and looked pretty nice. But it wasn't refrigerated like the ones they have now, and we would spread cotton [material] and sprinkle it [with water]. I bought it at Mr. Waki's store--I think it was Mr. Waki--but I really don't recall very clearly where it was. Anyway, I bought a vegetable stand and put the vegetables in there. Underneath there were boxes for carrots and potatoes and other things.

YS: When you say "stand," do you mean like in a vegetable market in Japan, where everything is . . .

YA: (Laughs) No, it was like this--we'd put the vegetables here. Then we'd sprinkle water in the mornings. Well, now there are refrigerators, so it's easy, but back then there weren't. So we would break off the bad parts and clean them [the vegetables] up. So when we put water on them, they look fresh. And to get a stand like that---I bought a showcase, too, somewhere.

WN: You had to buy the showcase?

YA: Yes. I needed money for that and money to stock things too, right? I could only make a very small store. I didn't even know about borrowing money at the bank and just used what I had borrowed from my friends to start.

YS: So there really wasn't much that was there [before YA took over]?

YA: Yes. And the things that were there were so dirty we couldn't use them. Just the place, the location. I bought it for the location.

YS: So, altogether, it actually cost you more than a thousand dollars?

YA: Yes. It certainly did. Anyway, whatever small amount Araki [YA's husband] got, we would put into the store. Otherwise--because it was cash and carry--if things sold, we had to keep things moving along.

YS: You opened your store then, in July of 1941, but in December, the Japanese . . .

YA: December 7, the war started, right? And like I told you before, if it were any other store, they would have had lots of stock in the warehouse, but we were just building a warehouse in back [of the store]. It was where the men used to sleep in the old days--the old sleeping room or bedroom, I guess you'd say. So, I made that into a warehouse and put the stock for the store in there. But at first, we only had the stock that was [already] in the store. If there had been extra money, we could have bought a lot more, but for quite a while, the warehouse was really empty. In the end, we had it chock-full, though. And then when the war started on the



seventh of December, we couldn't get anything after that.

YS: According to what you said earlier though, weren't you able to repay almost all of the money you had borrowed--most of the \$1,000--by that same December?

YA: No. I just paid back one of the people. I had borrowed \$500 and \$500 from two different people, right? When the war started, one of them started to worry because they had loaned me the money to buy the store--they were worried that I would not be able to repay. So the lady next door--Mrs. Kesaji--loaned me the money to pay them back, saying that I shouldn't have to be worried by such an amount of money. I had been paying it off bit by bit and there was only about \$300 left to repay. So, it wasn't really by December, but within one year that I was able to repay all of the \$1,000.

Is all this important, too? Is all this important for your records?

YS: Well, just so we can get an idea of how the store was actually operated. It's important in that respect . . .

YA: Well, I worked. I worked quite a lot.

YS: So your debt to Mrs. Kesaji was repaid in about one year?

YA: Within a year, yes . . .

YS: And then, how about the other person?

YA: The other person, too, I paid back within a year. They told me I could keep the money for a while and use it, but I had promised to pay it back within a year. It was just a word-of-mouth agreement, though.

YS: But wasn't it very hard to repay your debt to Mrs. Kesaji within one year?

YA: Yes, it was very hard. When the war started, no material [goods] could get through anymore, right? But gradually, because the soldiers came, the store began to prosper.

YS: Soldiers? Where were the soldiers?

YA: Well, I think I told you about this during our first talk, but there used to be what was called the Paia Japanese Language School up in back. When the war started, it was closed, right? All locked up--they wouldn't let anybody inside, and the government took the building. So when the soldiers came--from Haiku--they put [stationed] some at the Paia Japanese Language School. At first they strung barbed wire all around, so the soldiers couldn't get out. After about six months, you could go in and out of the camp, even though there was barbed wire. And because the soldiers came, we gradually began to prosper.

YS: The soldiers had come to the Japanese school for the defense of this area?

YA: Yes, defense. And they were being sent to Guam. They would be here for a while, and then they would be sent and others would come.

WN: R and R [Rest and Recreation].

YS: Wasn't it like a place where the soldiers would come and wait until their next orders came, and then go--maybe come back . . .

YA: I really don't know if there were facilities like that. I didn't ever go in the place myself. My husband went inside, though.

YS: And when the soldiers came, business got better and better?

YA: Yes. And at the same time the [plantation] camp [people]--it was a very big camp, bigger than Puunene is now--the camp people were very good to us, they trusted us. They would come asking me to write letters for them. We couldn't send anything to Japan during the war, of course, but maybe they had a daughter in Honolulu who could still read Japanese, so they would come to me and ask me to write. And they were kind enough to shop from us. It wasn't like a supermarket. Not, "If you going to buy, buy. We don't care." Each one of the men and women at the camp was my special customer . . .

YS: Sort of a social center?

YA: (Laughs) Everyone took very good care of us.

YS: That was after the war, wasn't it?

YA: No. That was during [the war]. How long did the war last? The better part of three years, I think. During the war, we made quite a bit. We paid off our debts. The real reason that I thought a store, a business, would be good was--I think I told you--so I could take care of my mother and build her a fine house--a house as good as any father could have built for her. Because of that, I quit the Japanese school and got in business, thinking it would be good. Once I had started though, I discovered it wasn't so easy.

YS: What sort of things sold best to the soldiers?

YA: To them, it was mostly juice and cigarettes.

YS: Weren't things like that available to them in the barracks?

YA: Later on, that might have been true, but I don't know if there was any OPA [Office of Price Administration]--or whatever they called it--in the beginning. Anyway, like I told you, my husband would get cigarettes from the wholesaler even if he didn't have any money and sell them all and get the cash. Then, [eventually with] the

wholesalers, we could do cash-and-carry business and get things a little cheaper by not paying the [interest] charge. Doing it that way for a period of time, we did well. So I think I was able to pay back the \$1,000 in less than a year.

YS: What actually would your sales receipts be like in one day?

YA: (Laughs) Oh, my. Very little, it was.

YS: But you must have sold a lot?

YA: Well, you say "a lot," but it was only me and another lady from the neighborhood that we had hired who ran it. Even when things sold, it wasn't big money. But to me, it seemed wonderful. When I thought about when I [previously] just made a monthly salary--I had been getting forty-five dollars a month [teaching at the Japanese school], right? Compared with that, I thought the store was good. As long as you worked, it was good.

YS: So your monthly profits [at the store] were far greater than forty-five dollars?

YA: Sure. They certainly were.

YS: About how much?

YA: Well, I don't have any records, so I don't know.

YS: Roughly . . .

YA: Sometimes my husband would go to the soldier's place, and they would tell him to get this or get that. He would get a big order and take it to them [wholesaler]. Cigarettes, for example, they were what made it, really. They would come in these big cases--like this. (YA gestures.) Back then, it was about \$200 for one case. I don't know how much it would be now. Anyway, he would sell them [to the soldiers] all for cash. He wouldn't give any discount on a carton, but would sell each one straight--at the retail price. That's why, eh? (Laughs) Even cigarettes were like that . . . . We sold a lot. It doesn't seem like much of a profit, but if you think of the numbers . . . . There were times when we couldn't reach into our own pockets when we were pressed for money.

YS: How big a difference was there between sales before the war and sales during the war?

YA: Well, before the war, I had just started, right? Like I told you before, a case of shōyu would have only four gallon-size jars in it. I put them all out, so that there wouldn't be space on the shelves. I couldn't order other things because we needed extra money for that. In the beginning, it was like that. But we never once charged anything at the wholesaler's or asked them to wait for payment. Because we

were cash and carry, we would take everything in cash and pay in cash. So even though the profit was small, it was pure profit, right? If you don't have the money, you don't buy. That's what I think. But as to how much . . . . Anyway, it was far better than forty-five dollars a month. So, I thought it was good--that it had been worth the hardship.

YS: Ten times as much? Twenty times?

YA: No. Not twenty times as much. I guess you could say ten times as much or so.

YS: Was there any difference in the things you sold after the war had started and the soldiers had come?

YA: Nothing special, really. Cigarettes were what sold the most. And they told me I should sell beer and sake up there, but I was against that and didn't sell any. They sold those things at the plantation [store], right? So I didn't sell any. We were near the church though, and the church man didn't want me to sell liquor and such. Even the people in the [plantation] camp asked me to sell some.

The vegetables and canned goods only turned a small profit. And after that, we sold tuna.

YS: Aku?

YA: Aku. It was aku. The wholesaler was right there--right down below here [in Wailuku]. Above here [i.e., YA's home]. When vanda orchid growing was popular, they had lots planted on the terrace up above here, when nobody else had any. And we would stop here when we came to pick up the fish. The view from up there was so nice, I used to think how nice it would be to have a house over here. That's where they were planted [the vanda orchids]. We would come to pick up the tuna, and later, we sold it in the store.

YS: At the store in Paia?

YA: Yes, at the store. [Selling] vegetables alone was no good. And meat--well, we couldn't cut meat, right? So we decided to sell tuna. And then I got an idea to sell ice cream--sherbet--and we bought a machine--a sherbet machine--for a thousand dollars. Oh, the sherbet would come out so pretty, but it only sold to the schoolchildren in the summertime. Because it was the country, business would get slow when it [the weather] got cold, so we decided [selling] tuna would be better. I put the machine that I had bought for a thousand dollars in the warehouse, where it sat until it was no good anymore. I should have sold it sooner and at least gotten my investment back.

YS: So the bonito, the aku, was actually for the people at the plantation? Not the soldiers?

YA: Yes. No connection with the soldiers. Oh, they might buy a little

to take down to the [navy] ships, but otherwise, no. Anyway, the soldiers were important too, but it was the people in the camp who really helped us. Little by little, we began to prosper.

YS: So, did the money for those sort of improvements to the store--like the \$1,000 for the sherbet machine--did that money . . .

YA: Yes. By that time, we could buy such things out of our profits.

YS: So, you didn't have to borrow anything?

YA: No. Not a cent from anybody else.

YS: Then it was really only the \$1,000 to start that you had to borrow?

YA: Just that first \$1,000. (Laughs)

YS: The rest was all your own?

YA: Yes.

YS: Were you putting into tanomoshi then?

YA: Tanomoshi? My husband was a member, but that was with his own money, not with money from the shop. Little by little, as things picked up at the store . . .

YS: So, even though you were a member of tanomoshi, you weren't favored by them especially?

YA: No.

YS: You said that you got the plantation's permission to open the store. But as your business became more successful, did you report to the plantation in any way?

YA: No. No reports. In the beginning, they wanted to know what I was going to sell. So, I listed everything--groceries, school supplies, fish, meat--like that.

YS: So, the only regulation or control the plantation exercised was to ask in the beginning what you were going to sell? They didn't interfere at all, no matter how successful your business became?

YA: That's right. But there were certain friends--no, not friends--certain other business competitors who tried to prevent us from selling tuna. They really jammed things up. I wonder if I told you this already? I wonder if it's all right to tell about things like this. It's probably better if I don't say anything that might seem like I was attacking someone else.

YS: Well, as long as we leave names out of it . . .

YA: Well, in the camp, over by [Paia] Hongwanji, there were some people who ran a grocery. We always heard that they were rich, so rich. And they were rich. Now they're in Honolulu. Quite a while back, they went to Honolulu and bought an apartment house and moved over there. The husband has died now, and the missus is quite old. They made a success and moved to Honolulu.

When I---when my husband came here [Wailuku] and asked if we could sell tuna, they [wholesalers] said, "Oh, yes. Please," because everyone wanted to buy tuna, right? So, they asked us to sell it. It was all right with the Board of Health, as long as everything was kept sanitary. So, we started to sell it. These people [competitors] went to the second manager, under Mr. Baldwin, and reported us to him, asking him to make us stop because we were interfering with their livelihood--with their business. It seems they said that if we sold tuna, it would interfere with their business, so could they please make us stop.

So, the main person from the plantation came to me and said, "You're selling tuna, but you cannot do this."

So I asked him, "Why is that?"

It was a Japanese--a Japanese that had come to see me. The haoles sent a Japanese. [YA declines further comment on topic.]

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

YS: So there was no pressure from the plantation, but you did have pressure from other Japanese business competitors?

YA: Yes. In my whole life, that was the most painful thing for me. I never even dreamed that anyone could think I would interfere in their business. Or that another Japanese would go to such lengths . . .

YS: In operating the store then, did you keep accounts? Any bookkeeping?

YA: Yes. We hired a bookkeeper to do it. We only paid about forty dollars, though. But around the time we closed the store [1969], there were fewer and fewer people, so I got him to teach me. Before long, I went to the tax office myself, even though I couldn't speak English. (Laughs) I could talk to them through someone else. So the tax office man said okay, that he would come on such and such a day. And he came and showed me how to fill out the forms. Like when you hire someone, you know, and you have to send one [form] in every three months. He taught me all that, and afterward, I did it myself. That was towards the end. At first I couldn't do any of that.

YS: Do you still have any of the account books from that time?

YA: No. It's been such a long time now, I don't have any. They say to



keep them for five years, right? But they were just getting in the way when we moved over here [Wailuku], so . . .

YS: You threw them out? What a loss.

YA: That's no loss!

(Laughter)

YS: Yes, it is. It's a loss to history.

YA: Oh! Oh.

YS: In English or Japanese?

YA: The bookkeeping? The bookkeeping was in English, but it wasn't such difficult English. Just the everyday cash-and-carry totals, added up each month. And if we hired someone, how much did we pay out. How much for expenses? If we made some donation, how much was it. Plus or minus, what . . .

YS: Did you have to keep the prices at your store the same as the prices at the plantation store?

YA: No. Nothing like that. During the war, there was the OPA, of course, and we couldn't go higher than their price. And there was hardly any profit on the canned goods, so then we hit on tuna, because there were so many Japanese at the camp. The percentage--the profit--was good on fish. It was perishable, right? Canned goods don't spoil.

WN: Did you sell to Filipinos, too? Fish?

YA: Yes. The Filipinos bought, too.

YS: How did you determine your retail price?

YA: Well, it depended on the times. Like if the rains came and the wind blew, then things [costs] went up and you had to sell at the higher price. But I used to think that business was an interesting thing. As I told you before, at first, even my husband---I told him to go down and watch Mr. [Yaichi] Noda [another interviewee] cut fish and get him to teach him how to do it. So, after he came back, he would say, "He [Noda] cut them like this." And he would turn the fish this way and that until it turned blue and got so soft you couldn't use it for sashimi. (Laughs)

Things are always a struggle at first, but if you don't give up, and succeed, it really is . . . . Because I was a widow, if I hadn't been running the store, I wouldn't even have been able to build this junk house, right? But because of the store, I was able to buy

this land and build the house.

YS: Did you take inventory at the store?

YA: Inventory? Yes, we did. At the end of the year.

YS: At the end of the year---about once a year?

YA: Yes.

YS: Did you do it yourself?

YA: No. We would all do it--with the people we had hired. The people who worked in the store would take down the retail price of things. I would go to the warehouse and write down how much we had of this, how much we had of that, and so on. Then I had to convert the cost of a case into a retail price, and figure how much I would make if I sold at that price, and report it. Because it was a relatively small store and my records were very accurate, the tax office man never charged me more when he came to check. (Laughs) He trusted me, I guess.

YS: In actually running the store--your customers--like after the war [began], it was the soldiers . . .

YA: No, not just soldiers. Mostly it was people from the camp. Lots of Japanese and Filipinos came to us, too.

YS: So, not just Japanese, but Filipinos--and Chinese?

YA: Chinese. They often came . . . . Yes, Portuguese, too.

YS: Were there ever problems with communication?

YA: Oh, well. We used broken English or even Japanese--some of the Filipino ladies could understand a little.

YS: So, your only assistant at the store was Mrs. Murakami?

YA: She was there, but we also hired some young people.

YS: Did you ever have any complaints from the customers?

YA: No, not especially. Probably because it was the camp. Even if they had some, they wouldn't be quick to tell me about it. (Pause) Nobody ever said we were expensive or cheap. Even if we were a little more expensive, people would come and buy from us rather than go all the way to Lower Paia to shop.

YS: Did the people from the camp ever ask for things that you didn't have? Items that you specially had to order?

YA: No. Well, we got things in for the people. We had almost everything.



YS: All sales were cash?

YA: Yes. Towards the end, there was cash and some charge, too. The Japanese almost all paid cash. But for the Filipinos, it was hard to pay.

YS: During our previous visit, your daughter told some story about some-- was it Portuguese?--who had bought so much and couldn't pay that Mama said not to sell anymore . . .

YA: (Laughs) No, it was a Filipino. I guess we did talk about that. You see, my daughter has always been very outspoken about that. Filipinos pay one day, then charge. Pay, then charge. But gradually, they charge more and more. But among Japanese or Filipinos, there are good ones and there are bad ones. (Pause) I don't know if I told you this, but they used to have plantation numbers. I would write their number--the number of the person who was going to charge something--in the book. I had a book out for the people who made charges. This Filipino man's wife had become ill when she had a baby, and it was hard for him as a man to raise the child, right? Gradually, it got so that he--not that he didn't want to pay, but even if he wanted to pay, he just didn't have the money. But my girl didn't understand any of that and was always saying not to sell anymore to the person with that number.

YS: But now, as to the retail price, Mr. Nishimoto here has a great deal of interest in how you would actually determine it. Like when we go shop at Liberty House or Woolworth's and buy something, the store's losses from shoplifting are added to the price. Did you consider all these factors in determining your retail price? Or just how did you do it?

YA: Well, it wasn't such a big store. You could mark up canned goods by such-and-such percent, vegetables by so much . . .

YS: There was an instruction sheet for such things?

YA: Oh, yes. Back then, the government gave it to us. They should still be doing it.

YS: That was the OPA, wasn't it?

YA: At that time, it was the OPA. But even after the OPA was disbanded--on vegetables, for example, we added 30 percent.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

YA: There was a list like that, saying what percent markup you could put

on each type of goods. We just followed that.

YS: So, the various stores all sold at about the same price? Was there any difference in pricing? Like, it's cheaper at Mrs. Araki's place, or Mr. Waki's place?

YA: That varied from store to store. Some places might mark up papayas, say, because they spoil easily. At my place, it was bananas that really sold. Lots of bananas. Even now, people sometimes mention it. They would bring them from Haiku, and I would buy literally the whole truckload. And to keep them, we built screened shelves behind our house. Thinking about it now, anybody could have jumped and gotten right inside. It was screen---there were mice, right? And mice eat bananas. So it was like a screened warehouse.

[On the shelves], we laid sacking, because they bruise, right? At first I didn't know and would cut them [the banana stalks] apart with a cleaver. But I would damage them by cutting in the wrong place. So my husband got a saw--a narrow saw--and showed me how to cut them apart with that.

YS: Each one?

YA: No. They come in like a hand, right? They would bring me the whole stalk, you see, and we'd weigh it. It was a pretty crude system, though. You know those scales where you put in a penny and find out your weight? My husband would figure it with one of those. Once they were cut with the saw, we had to spread them all out. Then in three or four days, they would begin to gradually get some color.

We would sell them cheaper than other places. If you bought them at the market--at the wholesaler--how much was it back then? We were buying for six cents [a pound]. Anyway, because we bought cheap, we sold cheap. And the people who bought at the [wholesale] market couldn't sell that cheap. We used to get almost double on things like fruit, because everyone would mark it up about 50 percent and sell at a high price. But we sold cheap, so bananas sold very well. Even if the profit wasn't much, people would often buy something else [from the store] as long as they had stopped by. The haoles often bought [bananas] from me. So I learned about things like that.

YS: That was one of the interesting things about business, eh? People might come to buy bananas, but once inside the store, they would . . .

YA: They would buy something else.

YS: Even now, when we got to a sale, we often buy something other than the bargain we came for. That's one of the techniques of business, I guess.

YA: And there were people out in the country who didn't have any [business] license and grew more than they could eat, so they would want to sell, too. They would come to me and say the price didn't matter, if I could just sell them. So I would buy from them, too.

YS: The people at the camp--the Japanese--they really liked bananas?

YA: Bananas are---apples and such are expensive, right? Because they come from over there [Mainland]. But bananas are cheap because they're grown here. Now they're about fifty-nine cents a pound.

YS: The Japanese in Japan seem to really like bananas, too.

YA: I guess that's so.

YS: Other than for bananas, can you recall what other wholesalers you had dealings with?

YA: Yes. I went to the vegetable market--the Farmer's Exchange. When my husband didn't go, I would get up early, about 4:30, and . . . . Oh, I would make sushi, too. In the morning, I would get up early while the children were still asleep. I would make enough for that day, and then the ladies who worked in the store would clean up for me when they came in. So then I could go to the market. When my husband was here, he would go early.

YS: That was for vegetables. And the fish market was over here [Wailuku]? What about canned goods?

YA: Canned goods were from Hata Store . . .

YS: A wholesaler?

YA: Yes. [Y.] Hata. And A&B [Kahului Store]. There were lots of places.

WN: So, how many altogether?

YA: For the fish, the fish market. The vegetable market . . .

YS: Hata's?

YA: Hata's and Hawaiian Grocery. We had stock in Hawaiian Grocery and used to buy from them . . .

YS: A&B [Alexander & Baldwin], that you mentioned earlier?

YA: A&B . . . . Other than that, there was Aloha--Aloha, what did they call it?--from Honolulu. Anyway, somebody would come from Honolulu and take orders.

WN: Before the war?

- YA: Before the war . . . . They came, but they stopped during the war.
- YS: Were all your transactions with the wholesalers all in cash, or was there some credit . . . .
- YA: At our place, we didn't use credit. Because we were cash and carry, I would always take cash and write a check right there and pay them. I paid cash at all wholesalers. It was my policy not to buy if I didn't have any [money], right? But even if I spent my money, by the evening of the following day, more would come in.
- YS: But when you say "check," do you mean . . . .
- YA: A check.
- YS: So, you really were keeping your cash at the bank then, rather than actually paying everything with cash?
- YA: Well, checks were come-inside money [i.e., money received from customers], right? And there was a bank close by there--in Paia by the mill--so you didn't even have to go to Lower Paia. So, I would take the money there and put it in a checking account. There were separate accounts for business and personal accounts, right? So I would put in the store's account, because it was for the store.
- YS: When did you start doing business--making deposits and so forth--with the bank?
- YA: From when the store first opened. But it wasn't like I got a loan or anything. We had a big safe at the store, about four feet square, but because we lived in the camp and not there at the store, it was safe, but not really safe, to put very much money inside.
- WN: So, do you remember what year you started going to the bank?
- YA: From the time we opened the store [1940], we had a checking account at the bank.
- YS: Where was that?
- YA: First Hawaiian Bank. It used to be the Bishop Bank.
- YS: If you had wanted to, could you have gotten things on credit?
- YA: Yes, I probably could have.
- YS: But you paid cash as a rule.
- YA: Yes. (Pause) So if I bought something, I would write a check and pay with that.
- YS: You mentioned business competitors earlier, but were there many other

stores there in Paia?

YA: No, only two.

YS: Which ones?

YA: The place I was just telling you about, and my place. The place run by the person who tried to stop us from selling tuna.

YS: What about Mr. Waki's place or . . .

YA: No, they were in Lower Paia. We were in Upper Paia. Upper Paia was a big camp then.

YS: Between these stores in the Paia area that were run by Japanese, was there any type of hui or cooperative association or organization? Were there any groups of this type at all?

YA: No, there was no such group. They were all formed later, I guess. It seems that there's an association now for small store businesses. But back then . . .

YS: So, back then, the two stores in your area and the stores down in Lower Paia really were in competition with each other?

YA: Well, yes. I guess that's right. (Chuckles)

YS: Was there ever a time when that competition was so fierce that it created some unpleasantness between you?

YA: Oh, no. Never.

YS: Can you tell us what sort of remodeling you did? What sort of things you changed?

YA: We had great hopes. But then my husband died and I was faced with running the business alone.

YS: When was it that your husband passed away?

YA: It was twenty-seven years ago--1953, I think. Yes, 1953. .

YS: So you had full responsibility for Araki Store after your husband passed away?

YA: Yes, that's right. When the war started, we had put the store in my name [because YA's husband was an alien]. So it actually would have become my responsibility in any case.

YS: So you did the work of two?

YA: The work of two--that I did. I even went over to pick up the tuna.

YS: Did you hire any assistant specially to help with . . .

YA: No, not an assistant. Just a sales girl for the store. That's all I hired. There were two girls. With just them I kept it going all that time.

YS: So the merchandise in the store remained about the same? You sold the same sort of things all along?

YA: Yes, that's right.

YS: Like you sold groceries, vegetables, and fish--did you add dry goods, or hardware, or . . .

YA: No, no. Nothing like that. No machines. We didn't touch any of that.

YS: Earlier, you mentioned the stand for the vegetables, the refrigerator, and the sherbet machine. Other than that, were there any machines or equipment that you remember getting?

YA: Well, I remember the old scale we had. Then I got one where you just put the stuff on top, and the thing spins around and tells you how heavy it is. I bought one of those.

WN: How about cash register?

YA: The cash register wasn't like the modern ones they have here now. You had to push it boom-boom like, and the total would pop up with a clang. (Chuckles)

YS: You had that from the very beginning?

YA: Yes. We replaced it--changed it eventually. We had that very first one though, until quite recently. We had it, but my grandchildren played with it and broke it, so I threw it away.

YS: Did you ever advertise, or have a bargain sale, or anything like that?

YA: No. It was just a small store. No advertisements, no bargain sales--just keeping at it steady. (Laughs)

YS: Not even a hand-written sign on the front of the store?

YA: No, no. We didn't do anything like that. It was a small store.

YS: When we talked to Mr. [Satoki] Ikeda [another interviewee], he said he put big posters up and . . .

YA: Yes. Well, Mr. Ikeda sold mostly clothing and other modern goods . . .

YS: For example, at shops in Japan, they've always got some simple

advertisement like, "Fresh tuna--Huge shipment just in!"

YA: The ladies [customers] there at the camp were so good to us that we didn't have to do anything like that. They were so kind to me. Even kamaboko--you can ask Mr. [Yaichi] Noda [another interviewee]--they would buy a boxful--maybe 200 kamaboko. The profit isn't that much, but all the little stores were almost the same and nobody else could sell very many. Just at my place, they sold like that. Everyone really treated us very well.

YS: You also mentioned writing letters for people earlier, but was your store more than a place to shop? Was it also a sort of center or gathering place for the Japanese community?

YA: No, no. It wasn't such a big deal as that. (Laughs)

YS: Other than writing letters, was there . . .

YA: After the war, I even wrote love letters. (Laughs) In Japanese, to send to Japan. This one man had gone to Japan after the war and met a wonderful person that he wanted to bring over to be his second wife. I even wrote a letter like that. But that wasn't during the war, it was after.

YS: The letters you wrote to Japan during the war, were they . . .

YA: No. Not to Japan.

YS: America?

YA: English? I can't write English. But lots of people could still read Japanese back then--over in Honolulu.

YS: Oh, Honolulu--not Japan.

YA: That's right. Not Japan. People came asking me to write letters like that. There was all sorts of things like that. I can't write English. I would write in Japanese. If it was for someone's daughter, then I would write so that she could understand . . .

YS: The customer would come and tell you what to write in Japanese?

YA: Yes, yes. But not at the store. They would come to my house and ask me to write such and such. I would try and write so that the daughter could see how much her mother and father really cared about their children.

YS: Other than writing letters, (chuckles) were there any other special services you provided?

YA: Nothing special, really.

YS: I hate to seem persistent, but was there no association of businessmen



or cooperative that you knew about?

YA: No, there wasn't anything like that either. I was especially busy, and being a woman, I didn't get out much, so I don't think there was anything. I just ran a small store, that's all.

YS: Did people ever come to solicit contributions for some camp or community function?

YA: Yes, that happened. But there was more of that in Wailuku and Kahului. Paia itself is the country, right? So there wasn't much of that there.

YS: What about for a bon dance in Paia? Would they come to ask . . .

YA: Yes, that happened. But back then, there wasn't any soliciting for the community, really. Not in Paia.

YS: Was there any effect on your store during the various strikes?

YA: During the first strike, I felt sorry for people who said they didn't have any rice, and even sold my household supply little by little. I thought I would have to start eating potatoes the next day. But when I got home that night, there was a big bag on the veranda with almost twenty pounds of rice in it. "What's this?" I thought. But one of my friends had heard me say that I didn't have any rice and had brought some of theirs over to share with me. But bit by bit--five pounds or so at a time--I sold nearly all the rice [so that] I had hardly any. But even though I had hardly any, when people came to me and told me they had none, I would have taken what little I had and given it to them.

YS: That was during the 1946 sugar strike, when the field workers went . . .

YA: This wasn't during the sugar strike, I don't think. A shipping strike. There was a strike for three months, one time.

YS: Would that have been in 1949 [Longshoremen's Strike]?

YA: My mind isn't so good, so I'm afraid I don't remember that well.

YS: Do you remember anything about the sugar strike that occurred right after the war?

YA: Sugar strike, yes. You say "strike," but it just meant that sugar sold a lot, because they weren't processing any. It didn't have any special effect on us.

YS: When did Araki Store finally close?

YA: Uh . . .

YS: Nineteen sixty-nine [1969] . . .

YA: I think so.

YS: About ten or eleven years ago?

YA: Yes. About that long ago.

YS: You currently practice flower arranging, I believe. When did you first start studying that?

YA: From the time I had the store. It's taken me about ten years to become a teacher of flower arranging. Almost ten years. Even when everyone else went off to play, I would close up the store and go home early so I could go to class.

YS: And you went to senryū [poetry] meetings, too?

YA: Yes, there was a senryū group that met . . .

YS: Calligraphy?

YA: Yes, I did calligraphy, too. I guess it's boasting to say it, but once I decide I want to learn something, I'll neglect everything else so I can go and learn. Even now, though the garden and all around the house is a mess, I'm taking art lessons. It's like that.

YS: Japanese style?

YA: I guess he teaches Japanese style. It's watercolors.

YS: Why was it that you finally closed the store in 1969?

YA: Because there was getting to be less and less business.

YS: Why was that?

YA: There weren't many people left. Everyone was moving from Paia to the Dream City of Kahului and the old folks who were left [in Paia] didn't eat that much. They could just plant some vegetables in the garden and . . . . I had said that I would keep the store going as long as there were some of the old-timers left. But my boy--the one you saw earlier burning rubbish--came and stamped his foot, and got mad, and told me to quit. So, in March, I quit. Finally I quit. I say "quit," but I had already stopped ordering stock when I thought I might quit. So because I hadn't bought anything, the warehouse stock had gotten less and less--until it was almost empty. [I sold] just what was [remaining in] the store. And if I didn't have something, I just wouldn't sell that anymore. And then, one day, I sold everything cheap. (Chuckles) I don't know how much I sold. I thought if I got my cost back, that was enough.

At that time, I saved a five-gallon can full of Chinese noodles and took it home. Even though I gave some away, they lasted until just

recently. Chinese are sure smart. You know those noodles that come in bundles?

YS: Long rice?

YA: Long rice, yes.

YS: It's been ten or eleven years now since you closed the store, but can you look back now and sort of sum up? Something you look back at and wish you had one differently, or something you can look back at and feel you really learned from?

YA: Yes. Looking back, though, there are so many things I learned. As you meet a lot of customers--a lot of people--you get to know the hearts of all of them, right? As long as you don't treat anyone badly. If you treat them badly, then they'll treat you badly. But otherwise, there really aren't any bad people. Everyone took such good care of me. "She's a widow now, so go buy it at Araki's," the people at the camp used to say. It made me want to sell things as cheaply as I could. It's really a wonder that I made it. It's been work, work, work.

YS: Thinking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?

YA: Oh, yes. Lots of things.

YS: Such as?

YA: Well, back then, if I sold something, the money came in. As long as I sold, the money came in. Even after the war, I sent an awful lot of money to Japan. Because my mother had died, I couldn't build her a house, but thinking back on it now, I wonder why I always gave money away when I had it. If there was some unfortunate person there, I just wanted to give it to them. But thanks to that, when I went to Japan, my relatives said how good I had been to them during the war and after the war. After the war, in Japan, they really couldn't get things to eat like they wanted. Did you experience anything like that?

YS: Oh, yes. Not that we couldn't get what we wanted, though. There just wasn't anything to eat at all.

YA: Oh. I would take about two cans of Spam, and two or so sausages, sugar, rice, and like that, and send them every week--not every week, but once a month, for sure. And I would send something to each of them. So I got to be very good at packing things. Even now, I can wrap things up really well, so that they won't come unwrapped like other people's. I sent a lot like that, and I sent money, too.

My sister had cared for my mother, so I thought I should do the best for her. Anyway, I would send everything in mother's name--because mother was very proud. She was in bed for five years. I had taken

a double bed back to her when I had gone in 1940. Out in the country [in Japan], they didn't have beds back then, because they slept on the floor. They put it in the bedroom there--the double bed--and mother slept on it by herself. And they would put the sugar, and canned goods, and other things that I had sent by her side. The neighbor ladies were always stopping by to ask how mother was, and they say that she would unhesitatingly give each one a cup or two of sugar and some canned goods. My younger sister wrote me and said that mother was giving everything away--that she didn't realize that my sister was in trouble, too. So she said that, "If you have something for mother, please send half to me and I will use it." So I sent the same to both of them, mother and daughter. They would put mother's beside her bed. It's no wonder everyone came, really, since there wasn't enough to eat. I even wrote my mother and told her to share some with the postman. One time, rice was stolen. I had sent it, but they said they never got it.

YS: Looking back, was going into business a big success for . . .

YA: It wasn't a big success, but I think it was a success for me. Somehow or other, I managed to stay alive and not want for food.

YS: With something to spare as well? You were able to study flower . . .

YA: With something to spare, yes. And I was able to learn. By hiring people, I was able to get away [from the store] and learn. Because of all that, I might not have much money now, but I was able to buy this land and build this house without imposing on my children.

YS: And now you teach the hobby that you used to enjoy so much.

YA: I'm just grateful that because I worked, I was able to eat and live from day to day.

YS: Are there any last remarks, of the things that we have been talking about, that you would like to make?

YA: The things that we've been talking about? No, I don't think so. I've already said so many unnecessary and embarrassing things. (Chuckles)

YS: Thank you very much for all your time . . .

YA: I'm really very sorry for chattering away about such unnecessary things.

END OF INTERVIEW

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